



Mexican Hot Cocoa

A holiday favorite in the Southwest, champurrado makes a wonderful accompaniment to a plate of cookies, but it's also hearty enough to stand on its own as a satisfying dessert. Traditionally, masa harina (corn flour) or arrowroot is used as a thickening agent and raw sugar as a sweetener, but the recipe below uses the more commonly available cornstarch and brown sugar. Adapt the flavorings to your taste: For a wholly sweet version, omit the chile powder. For a spicier version, add a dash of cayenne. If you like anise, nutmeg or cardamom, add a generous pinch of one or the other.

Ingredients
2 tsp. cornstarch
4 cups whole milk
2 (3 1/2-ounce) bars dark chocolate (minimum 70 percent cacao), chopped
1/4 cup dark brown sugar
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. ancho chile powder
pinch of salt
whipped cream and cinnamon sticks for garnish

Preparation

In a small bowl, whisk together 1/2 cup of milk and the cornstarch until smooth.

Heat remaining milk in a large saucepan (don't use aluminum) over medium heat until milk is steaming and small bubbles appear around the side. Do not boil. Add the chocolate, brown sugar, vanilla, spices and salt, and whisk until smooth. Stirring constantly, whisk in cornstarch mixture.

Whisking frequently, return mixture to a near-boil, as above. Remove from heat and let cool slightly; it will thicken as it cools.

Place cinnamon sticks in individual mugs, ladle cocoa over, top with whipped cream and serve.

Makes six 2/3-cup servings.